

13 September 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Soviet Ground Force Presence in Cuba [redacted]

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Attached is our latest estimate of the evolution of the Soviet ground force presence in Cuba from 1962 to date. Our intensive research of all available historical data continues and I will advise you as we research more fully developed conclusions. [redacted]

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STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment

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[redacted] Copy No. **14**

cc: The Vice President  
The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
Counsel to the President  
Director, Bureau of Intelligence  
and Research, Dept. of State  
Director, National Security Agency  
Director, Defense Intelligence  
Agency

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function and the combat capability of the Soviet ground forces is  
difficult to draw, and even artificial. They could well have done both.

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13 September 1979

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Provisional Assessment of Soviet Force Presence in Cuba  
During 1962-63 Period

1. It is our provisional assessment, based on a review of archival material, that the Soviets have maintained a ground forces unit presence in some form in Cuba since 1962, although its character, size, and mission have probably changed over time. Soviet ground forces units -- numbering some 5,000 men -- were deployed primarily at four locations in Cuba between August and October 1962 as security forces for the sites being built for Soviet MRBMs and IRBMs.

2. In October 1963, we estimated that by then most Soviet ground forces personnel had been withdrawn from these four main camps. A residual Soviet ground forces presence was noted. The Soviets were judged to be no longer organized as combat groups but were believed to be involved in training Cuban units. These judgments were supported by evidence of Cubans being trained in the operation of Soviet equipment, of the transfer of equipment and some of the camps to Cubans, and of the apparent presence of Cubans at all four installations.

3. From a review of photography, it appears to be the case that elements of a Soviet ground forces unit have been located at the Santiago garrison since the fall of 1962. The size of that presence during the 1962-63 period, following the post-crisis drawdowns, remains indeterminate, but was almost certainly smaller than its current strength. (An August 1963 estimate, based on photography, placed the number of Soviets at Santiago at 200).

4. The evolution of the size and mission of the present Soviet ground forces unit are the subjects of intensive review and analysis. It is likely that elements of the Soviet force engaged in training activities with the Cubans for an extended period following 1962-63. During this period of the rapid transfer of sophisticated equipment to the Cuban army, however, the distinction between the training function and the combat capability of the Soviet ground forces is difficult to draw, and even artificial. They could well have done both.

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At some time subsequent, at least by 1976, connections with training of Cubans apparently ceased and the unit assumed the character which present evidence now supports -- an independent Soviet ground force unit, garrisoned in Cuba, and engaging in periodic training of itself rather than of Cubans.

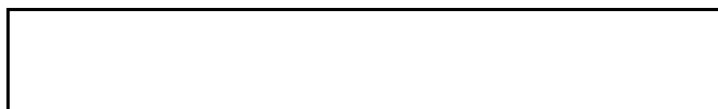
5. While we cannot as yet trace the evolution of the unit from its manifest combat character in 1962 through possible transitional stages thereafter, the burden of evidence indicates that it is not now a unit intended primarily for training Cuban forces.

-- The apparent lack of communications between the brigade and the Cuban army strongly suggests that the Soviet unit does not train Cuban personnel. In addition, Soviet training units, especially MAAG missions, usually consist largely of officers. It is unlikely that such an officer-heavy group would train as an integral unit or that it would or could exercise in the way we have observed the Soviets exercise at Candelaria.

-- The type of Soviet ground forces training conducted and the skill levels it suggests, combined with the regular and year-round nature of the training, indicates that the brigade does not conduct refresher training for Soviet army personnel in Cuba.

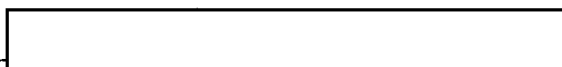
6. Our intensive investigation of the unit's character and mission, and possible periods of transition, continues. The above assessment will be updated as analysis warrants.

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12 September 1979

ST  
Special Purpose Barge in Cuba

We believe the special purpose barge presently in Cienfuegos Bay has been modified, possibly to carry diesel fuel.

The barge, brought from the USSR in 1970, was never used to add or remove water from the reactors of nuclear submarines in

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[REDACTED] the barge was altered at Havana ship-

yard in 1977 and 1978:

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